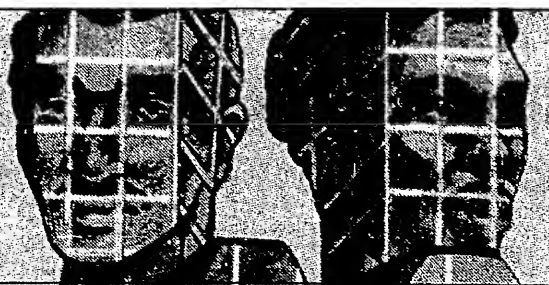


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The Seattle Times Seattle Post-Intelligencer

SUNDAY

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December 9, 1984
480 pages

WEATHER
Increasing chance of rain.
High, 40s; low, 30s.
Details, D 4.

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Fiery FBI raid ends Whidbey standoff



An FBI agent in camouflage fatigues confers with other agents outside site where Robert Mathews held law enforcement officials at bay.

Mathews believed dead in blazing house

WHIDBEY ISLAND — A 36-hour siege between the FBI and neo-Nazi extremist Robert Mathews ended in fire and the steady blast of automatic weapons last night as agents stormed the Whidbey Island house where Mathews was holed up.

Agents were to return to the scene early this morning to begin searching through the rubble for what they believe will be Mathews' body.

As a Navy helicopter gunship hovered overhead dropping illumination flares shortly after 6 p.m., an FBI special assault team opened fire on the house with their automatic weapons.

Steady gunfire — probably hundreds of rounds — could be heard for two minutes. Some five minutes later the sky was ablaze with orange and red hues as fire erupted in the island home where Mathews had barricaded himself. A top FBI official said he believed Mathews died in the fire.

"I feel quite certain he succumbed to smoke, fire, whatever," said Allen Whitaker, special agent in charge of the FBI office in Seattle.

"The fire started when we attempted to illuminate the building," said Whitaker, one of more than 30 FBI agents at the scene.

Observers less than a mile away heard explosions believed to be ammunition going off inside the house. They saw red and orange sparks leaping several hundred feet into the air above the treetops.

Emergency vehicles were taken in, and aid was requested from the Island County coroner and King County medical examiner.

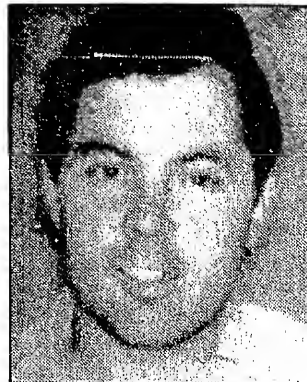
Joe Smith, FBI spokesman in Seattle, said there will be an administrative inquiry and a major crime scene investigation.

He said agents today will try to locate the body. "We are assuming he remained in the house," Smith said. "Nobody came out of that residence."

Just two hours earlier, a SWAT team had entered the house after firing tear-gas canisters, but they were turned back when Mathews began firing with a machine gun.

"We gave him tear gas and more tear gas," Whitaker said. "We lost contact with him and thought he might have been incapacitated." No agents were injured, Whitaker said.

At 6:11 p.m., the FBI went back in their second assault. As agents rushed the house, Mathews



Robert Mathews Withstood first assault

began firing. Then the fire broke out.

Dick Medina, Island County sheriff whose deputies also were involved, said, "We gave him every opportunity to give up."

A neo-Nazi extremist suspected of shooting and wounding an FBI agent in a Portland hotel escape two weeks ago, Mathews had barricaded himself in a rented cottage at 3308 Smugglers Cove Road, overlooking Lagoon Point.

Early Friday, the FBI and other "police" officials had swept two other homes on the east side of the island, arresting three people believed connected with Mathews.

Late Friday, a fourth man was taken into custody after negotiations began.

Talks continued through the night before breaking down yesterday morning. Tear-gas canisters were fired intermittently after 11 a.m. until the assault at 3:30 in the afternoon.

The FBI originally thought Mathews might be holding hostages in the Lagoon Point home. However, FBI spokesman Joe Smith said yesterday, "We were only negotiating with one man."

The agents were fairly sure the man in the house was the man they wanted. But, added Smith: "You can't be sure until you look at him face to face."

FBI agents had been readying for the assault for nearly a week, taking over an island home and bringing in Island County deputies and Navy personnel. Residents were evacuated from nearby

Please see ISLAND on A 5

Chronology of the standoff

■ **Daybreak Friday:** FBI agents, Whidbey Island sheriff's deputies and others approach Greenbank-area houses on the ground. A Navy helicopter, armed with machine guns and bullhorns, demands that the residents come out.

■ **Friday morning:** Randolph George Duey is arrested without resistance from one of the houses. He is charged with possession of a machine gun and harboring fugitive Robert Mathews.

■ **Friday afternoon:** Sharon Kay Merkl and Robert Emil Merkl are arrested in a house a half-mile away. They, too, are accused of harboring Mathews.

■ **Friday evening:** FBI agents set up negotiations with the resident of a third house, a mile from Greenbank at Lagoon Point on the west side of the island. An FBI spokesman says Mathews is believed to be inside but they can't be sure.

■ **7:30 p.m. Friday:** A fourth person, Bartlett Udell, is taken into custody as negotiations continue. The scene continues on into the night as the FBI brings in SWAT teams and sharpshooters.

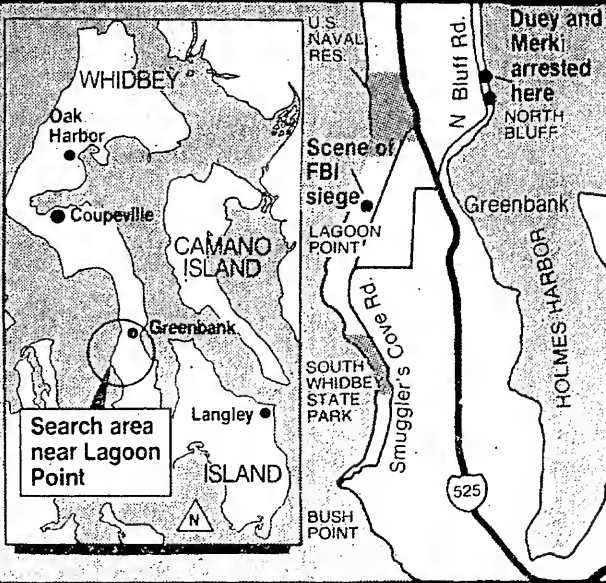
■ **Saturday morning:** The FBI now believes the man in the house is Mathews and he is alone. Negotiations continue.

■ **11 a.m. Saturday:** Negotiations break down and the FBI begins firing tear-gas canisters into the house.

■ **3:30 p.m. Saturday:** A SWAT team enters the house where Mathews is believed holed up. Gunfire is exchanged and the FBI agents must retreat from the house.

■ **6:11 p.m. Saturday:** Flares from helicopters illuminate the house and SWAT team storms again. Gunfire is exchanged. The house bursts into flames. Mathews presumably dies in the fire.

Whidbey Island siege



Police missed their best chance in serial-killer probe

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by Tomas Guillen
and Carlton Smith
Times staff reporters

King County Police missed what may have been their best chance to catch the Green River murderer in the fall of 1982 because of erroneous assumptions and a narrow police focus on a "good suspect."

And while police interest in the case waned in 1983, the killer picked up most of his victims.

Police records and interviews with police officials indicate that if the nation's worst ongoing serial-murder case had been staffed from the beginning at the level it now enjoys, as many as 35 dead or missing persons might still be alive, and that the killer could be in custody. So far, 42 dead or missing women have been attributed to the killer.

"In hindsight," said Capt. Frank Adamson, "of course we would have staffed it in the way we've staffed it today, fairly quickly."

From December 1982 to December 1983, while the investigation was at its lowest ebb, 29 young women were either killed or reported missing.

Many of the disappearances and deaths took place

GREEN RIVER: The Investigation

Inside: The Green River Task Force will crank up its new \$200,000 computer soon in high hopes that the super data-processor will aid the investigation of the mass murders. Northwest, D 2-3.

while county and city police were under orders to seek out and report suspicious activity in areas of frequent prostitution.

A review of arrest reports involving the dead and missing, however, shows that the police placed a far higher priority on making prostitution arrests than in trying to determine whether a killer might be active

along a short stretch of Pacific Highway South.

Although instructed to list the license-plate numbers of all who picked up prostitutes in that area, many undercover vice officers did not do so.

Information about activity that took place on the dates of the disappearances is now to be fed into the Green River Task Force's computer for analysis.



Information that was available then, and is lacking now, has made the police task that much harder.

The early investigation also suffered from the assumption that the killer would keep dumping victims in waterways such as the Green River.

When police received no new reports of murder victims in waterways, they assumed that either their earlier suspect was guilty of the crimes, or the killer had left the area.

The lack of new victims ultimately led Maj. Richard Kraske, who was then in charge of the investigation, to decide to reallocate his few detectives to their regular duties. That decision effectively reduced the investigation to a holding action.

Kraske said he did not consider asking his superiors for more assistance at the time.

"At that time," he said, "with only the five (dead) that we had ... I don't feel in my own mind that I would have been justified to go in there and ask for more people. We were trying to handle it in the Criminal Investigation Division on our own in that particular period. It was only after the other bodies started to come in and Sheriff (Vern) Thomas was on board that we began to say we've got to take a concentrated effort at it."

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